UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Bureau of Agricultural Economics
Washington

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May 1, 1925

FOREIGN NEWS ON BROOM CORN

CORRECTION OF BROOM CORN STATISTICS

In the statistical analysis of the broomcorn situation, published in Foreign Crops and Markets for February 25, 1925 (Volume 10. No. 8), the production figures for the United States were inadvertently referred to as being in long tons. This should have read "short tons". The import and export statistics, however, represent long tons of 2240 pounds. In order that the statistics of production and international trade may be uniform, the trade statistics and the figures representing the net supply have been converted on the basis of short tons. The corrected table appears below.

BROOM CORN: Acreage, Production, Imports, Exports and Net Supply
For the United States, Calendar Years 1913 to 1924.

Calendar year	Acreage	Production	Imports 1/	Exports	Net Supply
	Acres	Short tons	Short tons	Short tons	Short tons
1913.....	(2)	(2)	450	4,044	----
1914.....	(2)	(2)	1,148	3,118	----
1915.....	230,100	52,242	24	4,852	47,144
1916.....	235,200	38,726	177	3,788	35,115
1917.....	345,000	57,400	932	3,539	54,843
1918.....	366,000	62,300	1,978	4,364	59,414
1919.....	352,000	53,400	11	4,834	48,577
1920.....	275,000	36,500	1,524	4,387	33,637
1921.....	222,000	38,200	58	3,442	34,816
1922.....	275,000	37,300	744	5,049	32,995
1923.....	536,000	81,153	7,180	3,914	84,419
1924.....	442,000	75,832	569	5,179	71,222

Acreage and production figures are the official estimates of the U. S. Dept. of Agriculture. Imports and exports compiled from the official reports of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce.

1/ General imports, 1913 to 1921; figures for 1922 to 1924 represent imports for consumption.
2/ No official statistics available.

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July 17, 1925

FOREIGN NEWS ON BROOM CORN

THE PRODUCTION OF JIRICA IN MEXICO

Jirica, a native species of Nolina of the Yucca family, and an excellent substitute for broom corn, grows profusely on the prairies of the Piedras Negras Consular District and across Northern Mexico from Tamaulipas to Sonora and in Southern Arizona, according to a report to the Department of Agriculture by American Consul Drew Linard at Piedras Negras, Mexico. As the plant is not cultivated the area of production cannot be accurately determined. The State of Tamaulipas, directly south of the Brownsville section of Texas, and bordering the Consular District, is the only section of this locality where it is harvested and baled for commercial use. All these shipments are invoiced at the Piedras Negras Consular office. The industry is but 2 years old, and produced a larger harvest in 1923, its first year, than in the subsequent years, as shown in the following comparative table for 1923, 1924 and 1925:

	1923	1924	First six months 1925
Tons.....	197	80	14
Value.....	$4,331	$1,645	$295

Tests by broom manufacturers in the United States have proven that jirica is admirably suited for the manufacture of a fair quality of ordinary household broom somewhat coarser and stiffer than those made of broom corn, and its commercial possibilities, while yet not fully proven, seem to indicate a ready market if the industry expands sufficiently and produces in volume. An export duty levied in 1924 by the Mexican customs however, has in a great measure discouraged efforts in expanding the industry, in view of the fact that the net f.o.b. price Eagle Pass, Texas, which prevailed prior to the levy of the present export duty, allowed only a fair margin of profit in competition with American production.

Production

Jirica grows wild and no attempt has been made to cultivate it, although cultivation is contemplated if the commercial value of the jirica fiber is thoroughly proven, and the f.o.b. price at Eagle Pass, Texas goes high enough to justify production and exportation after deducting the recently imposed export duty of 1 centavo (1/2 cent) per kilo (2.2 pounds).

The collecting and baling of jirica for shipment is carried on by laborers under the task or contract system, and involves the principal cost of production. No equipment is used in harvesting. Laborers furnish their own implements, cutting the leaves and weighing and delivering them to nearby storage stations, where they are sorted and baled. Failure to produce more than requirements for local needs prior to 1923, has been due to lack of initiative in organizing the industry.

It is estimated that not more than 1000 tons can possibly be collected and baled under the prevailing labor and transportation conditions. The successful production of jirica will require more capital and better organization than is found under the methods at present used.

Transportation.

The transportation of the baled product to railway centers when cleaned of the leaves and useless broken stalks, and sorted into convenient lengths for baling, is the only important factor in the cost of production other than collecting and baling. The bales are hauled by ox carts to railway shipping points for transportation to the point of manufacture in the United States. The expense of transportation increases as the area to be covered in collecting jirica is extended. The first shipment of jirica was made in 1923, with a declared export value of $10. a ton. This value was increased to $32. a ton in a shipment made 6 months later; while the present value is fairly stable at about $20. a ton. These values are exclusive of export duty and railway transportation charges.

Duties.

The United States permits the free entry of jirica when in a natural state, but imposes a duty if the leaves are split or trimmed, even when trimmed for the purpose of uniformity in baling. In 1924 Mexico imposed an export tax of one centavo a kilo, as it was believed, apparently, that the industry would increase in importance and consequently be a source of revenue to the Government. This export tax, however, curtailed further effort in production, and but one shipment of 14 tons, valued at $295 has been made during the first six months of 1925. The natural leaves, upon which no export or import duty is collected, cannot be exported at a profit because the untrimmed product has little market value in the United States, manufacturers demanding that the leaves be split when freshly harvested and green, rather than after they have dried while in transit from harvest point to consumption center.

Markets.

Jirica is utilized locally on a small scale in the manufacture of crude brooms and baskets, but the demand is small and without commercial possibilities. Manufacturers in the United States used all the jirica that was harvested and exported at the price that prevailed prior to the imposition of the export duty, and it was believed that a permanent industry had been established. Recent inquiries made as to the future outlook for its production and shipment have indicated discouragement rather than any efforts to produce on a larger scale. The removal of the export duty, however, would undoubtedly result in the growth of exports to the United States. No broom corn is imported into the Piedras Negras Consular District.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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November 22, 1926.

FOREIGN NEWS ON BROOM CORN

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REVIEW OF THE WORLD BROOM CORN SITUATION

The United States not only produces the bulk of the world's crop of broom corn but it is also the principal consumer of the product and the largest manufacturer of brooms, according to a world survey of the broom corn situation recently completed by the United States Department of Agriculture. Italy, Hungary and France are the only foreign countries in which there is any indication that broom corn is being produced in commercial quantities although it is grown in Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Spain, Mexico, Brazil, Uruguay, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, Australia, North China and Japan. The surplus producing countries, however, are practically limited to the United States, Italy and Hungary. Most of the brooms and brushes used in the European market are manufactured from hog bristles, piassaba, cocomut fiber and other broom corn substitutes, which are said to be cheaper and more durable.

United States Broom Corn Industry

Production

While broom corn represents a relatively small proportion of the total value of agricultural production in the United States it is of considerable importance in the regions where it is extensively grown. The estimated farm value of the 1925 crop in the United States was $4,501,000 as compared with $7,478,000 in 1924 and $12,989,000 in 1923. The 1926 crop is estimated at 47,700 short tons as compared with 29,900 short tons in 1925, 78,200 short tons in 1924 and 81,200 short tons in 1923. Oklahoma in recent years has produced from 40 to 60 per cent of the total crop. The other producing states in the order of their importance are Illinois, New Mexico, Kansas, Texas and Colorado. Relatively small quantities are grown in Missouri and Tennessee.

Consumption

The net supply of broom corn retained for consumption in the United States for the five years 1921-25 averaged 50,200 short tons annually. The carryover of broom corn on June 1, 1926, as reported by the Hay, Feed and Seed Division of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, amounted to 29,172 short tons as compared with 52,027 short tons on June 1, 1925. As the 1926 crop is estimated at 47,700 short tons the total available supply for domestic manufacture and for export during the year ending June 30, 1927 will amount to approximately 76,872 short tons as compared with 81,927 short tons for the corresponding period in 1925-26. These last mentioned figures do not include imports and re-exports which are usually relatively insignificant. Foreign broom corn is generally regarded as inferior in quality to that produced in this country and is imported in appreciable quantities only during short crop years.

By far the largest proportion of the domestic crop is consumed by the domestic broom manufacturing industry. This industry numbered 444 establishments in the census year 1923 as compared with 868 in 1914. The factories in 1923 used $14,934,000 worth of raw material as against $7,884,000 worth in 1914. The value of the brooms produced was $26,262,000 in 1923 as compared with $14,085,000 in 1914. The estimated average price received by the farmer for broom corn was $212 per ton in 1923 as compared with only about $80 per ton in 1914.

Export Trade

Canada, Cuba, Mexico, Newfoundland, Labrador and Panama are practically the only foreign markets in which American broom corn has been used in the past five years. Broom corn exports from the United States during the five years 1921-25 averaged 4,122 short tons annually. Of that amount Canada took an average of 3,167 short tons annually, or 77 per cent, and Cuba 784 tons, or 19 per cent. The remaining 4 per cent was distributed as follows: Mexico 104 tons annually, Newfoundland and Labrador 43 tons annually and Panama 16 tons annually. Considerable quantities of brooms are also exported from the United States, principally to the British market, including the Irish Free State, Honduras, Cuba, Panama, the Philippine Islands, Canada and Mexico. Such exports in 1925 amounted to 22,000 dozen valued at $126,000.

Foreign Markets for American Broom Corn

With the exception of Canada, Cuba and Mexico, there seem to be no prospects of expanding the demand for American broom corn or brooms in foreign countries. Among the factors affecting the demand for the American product abroad are the wide use of other broom and brush making material, competition of broom corn from nearer sources of supply, high transportation costs, tariff barriers, low purchasing power and in many cases a deep rooted prejudice against the American style of broom.

Canada

Canada at the present time is the most important market for American broom corn exports, taking around 3,000 short tons annually. The production of broom corn in Canada is limited to a small quantity in the Province of Manitoba, says Mr. Walter J. Donnelly, Assistant Trade Commissioner at Ottawa The output is practically negligible as compared with the consumption of broom corn throughout the Dominion and does not compete with imports from the United States. It is generally conceded that unless Canada adopts some other fibre as a substitute for broom corn it will continue to be dependent upon the United States which supplies practically all of the broom corn used in the manufacture of broom corn products in that country. During the fiscal year ended March 31, 1926, Canada's entire importation of broom corn, amounting in value to $483,000, was obtained from the United States. Most of the broom corn imported from the United States is of the standard type and is used in the manufacture of house brooms. Dwarf type broom corn is imported for use in making whisks.

The prospect for American broom corn retaining its hold on the Canadian market is very bright. Manufacturers are satisfied with the quality but occasionally complain that the price is too high and that if a reduction could be negotiated the consumption of American broom corn would increase appreciably. A few manufacturers assert that American producers should improve their method of separating corn as considerable sunburned corn is found to be mixed with the good quality. The policy of American producers in establishing agencies in the principal cities is strongly approved by manufacturers. They feel that it brings them into closer touch with the producer and that any complaints they may have to offer receive prompt attention. Moreover, they claim that since the establishment of these agencies the quality of broom corn has improved. American brooms offer keen competition on the Canadian market but domestic manufacture is rapidly expanding, thereby enlarging the market for American broom corn while tending to decrease the demand for American brooms.

Cuba

Cuba is the second most important foreign consumer of American broom corn, taking on the average around 780 short tons annually. Broom corn is not grown in Cuba. The tariff of $13.00 per 100 pounds on brooms prohibits the importing of the manufactured article, says Mr. C. R. Strackbein, the American Assistant Trade Commissioner at Havana. On broom corn, however, the tariff is only 64¢ per 100 pounds. The local production of brooms is estimated at about 100,000 per month. The broom corn used is what is termed common quality, the f.o.b. price of which is about 7¢ per pound in Wichita. The wholesale price of brooms during 1924 ranged from $2.25 to $2.50 per dozen. About 90 per cent of the brooms used in Cuba are made in Havana. About 80 per cent of the output is of the cheaper 14-pound 2-string variety. The brooms are sold by manufacturers direct to retailers.

Mexico

Mexico, which has provided a market for approximately 100 tons of American broom corn annually during the past five years, has grown some broom corn in the various states from time to time, but never on large areas or in quantities which make it of commercial importance in the trade of the country. The competition of other crops in the areas most adapted to the cultivation of broom corn, as well as the system of state export taxes, has prevented it from becoming of commercial importance. The principal producing center at the present time is the state of Chihuahua.

There are no large broom factories in Mexico, as most of the work is done in small shops or in the homes of the peasants. Only a limited amount of American brooms are used, principally along the Texas border where they are purchased from retailers in the United States by the Mexican consumer as the need arises. The floors of most houses throughout Mexico are of stone and are washed rather than swept. The brooms commonly used are made of palm leaves and retail at about 10¢ each. Bundles of grass roots or maguey fiber are used for scrubbing floors in most of the rural households. A substitute widely used in Mexico in the manufacture of brooms, scrubbing brushes and similar articles, and known locally as Zacatan, grows wild over large areas of rough land in poor soil. Another substitute for broom corn extensively used in Mexico is the product known as Jirica. It grows profusely in the state of Tamaulipas.

Other Foreign Countries

The survey made by the Department of Agriculture shows that broom corn constitutes but a very small proportion of the raw material used in the manufacture of brooms and brushes in other foreign countries. In the few European countries where it is used, neighboring sources of supply are able to supply the demand at prices with which it would be impossible for the American product to compete. Hog bristles, coconut fiber, horsehair, piassaba, and other vegetable fibers constitute by far the greatest part of the raw material used in the manufacture of brooms in most foreign countries. The American type broom is unknown in many countries and where it is known there seems to be a strong prejudice against it, chiefly because of its dust raising properties, and the fact that brooms from other materials are believed to be cheaper and more durable. The push broom is generally used in Europe in preference to those manipulated by a swinging motion.

Broom Corn Situation in Principal Foreign Producing Countries

Italy

The broom corn industry of Italy is centered largely in the northern parts of the country near Leghorn, Venice, Florence and Genoa. Sicily formerly grew considerable quantities of broom corn but at the present time farmers are endeavoring to exterminate the plant by giving it to people who will agree in exchange to dig up the roots. The total commercial crop in Italy, so far as can be determined from the reports available, ranges from 10,000 to 12,000 short tons annually, most of it being produced in the Provinces of Tuscany and Venice. Planting usually takes place in April and harvesting in August and September. No material expansion is expected in the Italian broom corn industry because of the competition of other more profitable crops. It is estimated that about one-third of the crop is exported. Considerable quantities of brooms are also exported from Italy.

Hungary

According to statistics supplied by the Royal Hungarian Statistical Bureau, the production of broom corn in that country in 1924 amounted to 10,400 short tons from an area of 111,000 acres as compared with 8,430 short tons from 123,000 acres in 1923. The statistics cover areas on which broom corn was grown either as a main or as a secondary crop. The crop is usually planted between April 15 and May 15 and harvested between September 20 and October 10. The area devoted to broom corn by individual farmers is rarely above 3 acres even when it is grown as a main crop. A few large estates, however, cultivate as high as 300 acres of broom corn.

Very little care is exercised in planting, cultivating, harvesting and curing the crop. The value of the land upon which broom corn is grown varies from $60 to $120 per acre, depending upon the locality and the area purchased. The land tax is about 40¢ per acre. The cost of labor in general is about 87¢ per day. During 1924 the grower received on an average $3.00 per 220 pounds for broom corn seed and $2.15 per 220 pounds for broom corn. About 80 per cent of the brooms manufactured in Hungary are made in private homes during the winter months.

France

The production of broom corn in France during the three years 1922-24 averaged 11,700 short tons annually, according to Consul Raymond Davis of Paris. Approximately 67 per cent of the crop is produced in southern France near Marseilles. Most of the balance is grown in the vicinity of Bordeaux. Mr. Davis S. Greene, the Assistant American Trade Commissioner at Paris, states that there is no market in France for American broom corn or brooms because of the high transportation charges and the fact that Italian and Hungarian products are cheaper.

French broom corn is comparatively coarse and for that reason does not command the price paid for broom corn from Italy and Hungary. The products from these countries are said to be firmer, straighter and whiter when bleached. Practically all of the domestic crop is consumed by local manufacturers and has to be supplemented by imports. The annual production of brooms in France is said to have increased from about 800,000 annually during the final pre-war years to a present figure of approximately 1,200,000. Fully one-third of the broom corn used by the French broom factories is imported. As a general rule the French product is used for the core of the broom and the Italian or Hungarian product for the outside part. The French imports of broom corn during the three years 1922-24 averaged 3,900 short tons annually, principally from Italy.

BROOM CORN: Acreage, Production, Imports, Exports and Net Supply for the United States, calendar years 1913-1926

Calendar year	Acreage	Production	Imports	Exports	Net supply
	Acres	Short tons	Short tons	Short tons	Short tons
1913	a/	a/	450	4,044	---
1914	a/	a/	1,148	3,118	---
1915	230,100	52,242	24	4,852	47,144
1916	235,200	38,726	177	3,788	35,115
1917	345,000	57,400	982	3,539	54,843
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1922	275,000	37,300	744	5,049	32,995
1923	536,000	81,153	7,180	3,914	84,419
1924	451,000	78,200	569	5,179	73,590
1925 (Preliminary)	200,000	29,900	165	5,501	24,564
1926 Oct. estimate	294,000	47,700	b/ 682	b/ 3,077	---

Acreage and production figures are the official estimates of the United States Department of Agriculture. Imports and exports compiled from the official reports of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce.
a/ No official statistics available. b/ 9 months only (Jan. to Sept. 30, 1926).

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